

IN THE CLAIMS:

What is claimed is:

1. (Currently Amended) An apparatus for assembling tires and wheels with respect to one another comprising:

a plurality of modules removably interconnected with one another to form an assembly line with each of said plurality of modules including an upper frame assembly and a lower frame assembly with the upper frame assembly being mounted on said lower frame assembly; [[and]]

an endless conveyor member for moving the wheels along said assembly line and supported for circling movement along [[said]] the length by said plurality of modules; and

a plurality of carriages moveable along said plurality of modules with said conveyor member, each of said plurality of modules including first and second aligning tracks associated with said upper frame assembly for guiding movement of said carriages through said plurality of modules in a first direction.

2. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1 wherein said plurality of modules are identical with respect to one another.

3. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1 wherein each of said plurality of modules is exchangeable with any other of said plurality of modules.

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4. (Cancelled)

5. (Cancelled)

6. (Cancelled)

7. (Currently Amended) The apparatus of claim [[6]] 3 wherein each of said plurality of modules further comprises supporting mechanisms for supporting movement of said carriages through said plurality of modules in a second direction.

8. (Currently Amended) An apparatus for assembling tires and wheel with respect to one another comprising:

a plurality of modules removably interconnected with one another to form an assembly line with each of said plurality of modules including an upper frame assembly and a lower frame assembly with the upper frame assembly being mounted on said lower frame assembly;

a plurality of workstations dispersed between said modules for assembling the tires to the wheels; [[and]]

a ~~continuous~~ conveyor member for moving the wheels and the tires along said assembly line, ~~wherein~~ said conveyor member defining[[es]] a closed loop resting upon said modules while transporting the tires in a first direction and supported by said modules while moving in a return direction; and

a plurality of carriages moveable along said plurality of modules with said conveyor member, each of said plurality of modules including first and second aligning tracks associated with said upper frame assembly for guiding movement of said carriages through said plurality of modules in a first direction.

9. (Currently Amended) The apparatus of claim 8 wherein said ~~endless~~ conveyor member is a chain.

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10. (Original) The apparatus of claim 8 wherein said plurality of workstations include a tire soaping station, a wheel soaping station and a wheel assembly workstation for assembling individual said soaped tires and individual said soaped wheels with respect to one another.

11. (Original) The apparatus of claim 8 wherein said plurality of workstations include at least two wheel assembly workstations for assembling individual said soaped tires and individual said soaped wheels with respect to one another.

12. (Cancelled)

13. (Currently Amended) The apparatus of claim ~~[[12]]~~ 8 wherein each of said plurality of modules further comprises supporting mechanisms for supporting movement of said carriages through said plurality of modules in a second direction.

14. (Currently Amended) An apparatus for assembling tires and wheel with respect to one another comprising:

a plurality of modules removably interconnected with one another to form an assembly line with each of said plurality of modules including an upper frame assembly and a lower frame assembly with the upper frame assembly being mounted on said lower frame assembly;

an endless conveyor member for moving the wheels along said assembly line and supported for circling movement along [[said]] the length by said plurality of modules;

a plurality of carriages moveable along said plurality of modules with said endless conveyor member, each of said plurality of modules including first and second aligning tracks associated with said upper frame assembly for guiding movement of said carriages through said plurality of modules in a first direction;

supporting mechanisms of each of said plurality of modules supporting movement of said carriages through said plurality of modules in a second direction;

a wheel soaper workstation for soaping wheels moved along said assembly line by said endless conveyor member and disposed along said assembly line adjacent a first module of said plurality of modules;

a tire soaper workstation for soaping tires to be moved to said endless conveyor member and disposed along said assembly line adjacent a second module of said plurality of modules;

a transfer device for receiving soaped tires from said tire soaper workstation and transferring said soaped tires to said endless conveyor member downstream of said wheel

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soaper and disposed along said assembly line adjacent a third module of said plurality of modules;

a wheel assembly workstation for assembling individual said soaped tires and individual said soaped wheels with respect to one another, said wheel assembly workstation disposed along said assembly line adjacent a fourth module of said plurality of modules, downstream of said wheel soaper workstation and said transfer device; and

a tire inflation workstation disposed along said assembly line adjacent a fifth module of said plurality of modules, downstream of said wheel assembly workstation.